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Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
University of California
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March 5, 2024

The Honorable Liz Ortega
Chair, California Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment
Legislative Office Building, 1020 N Street, Room 155
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Constitutional Amendment 14 (Ortega), Scheduled for hearing in the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment, March 13, 2024

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Ortega:

Writing on behalf on the systemwide Academic Senate of the University of California (UC), we respectfully oppose Assembly Constitutional Amendment 14 (ACA 14). While the proposed legislation is well-intentioned and aims to extend certain labor protections to UC employees, it raises several serious concerns from the faculty perspective. In their opposition letter, the UC Office of the President has clarified why most of the proposed protections are redundant and how the missions of the University are compromised by aspects of the amendment. We too are deeply concerned about a constitutional amendment that would set a precedent that runs counter to UC's autonomy and would also hold the University to a different standard than other higher education institutions in the state. As chair of the UC Academic Senate, I highlight those aspects that will have deleterious effects on faculty, students, and other members of our academic community who receive training and mentoring from faculty.

UC faculty have various missions: instruction, research and creative endeavors, and public service. The framework specifically developed for state employees that would be imposed on all UC employees, including faculty, under the proposed amendment is ill-suited to the unique type of work that faculty do and how they dynamically balance these missions. The instructional calendar includes ebbs and flows of intensity not only throughout the year but within a given academic term. Research and creative activity follow their own and various patterns, whether undertaking field or archival work, directing or participating in a performance, running an experiment overnight, undertaking time-intensive research while on sabbatical, and so forth. This lack of suitable fit is also largely true for our graduate trainees, especially those who hold teaching assistantships and research appointments and who must simultaneously, in their primary role as students, have sufficient flexibility to manage their academic progress.

Under ACA 14, UC faculty and student trainees would lose the necessary flexibility to efficiently and appropriately allocate our work time. This, in turn, will have a negative impact on the University's research productivity and teaching excellence. The proposed legislation, impairing how faculty organize their own time and labor, would strike at the heart of UC's missions and at the entire faculty's academic freedom insofar as it will impede our ability to deliver our best work in service to the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Steintrager', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Steintrager, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: UC Academic Council Members
President Michael V. Drake
Provost & Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs Katherine Newman
Associate Vice President & Director of State Governmental Relations Kathleen Fullerton